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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

1955.

To the Chairman and Members of the Alnwick Rural District Council:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present to you the Annual Report for 1955.

For the period commencing September, 1954, until my appointment on 1st June, 1955, Dr. R. Keenlyside acted in a temporary capacity as Medical Officer of Health. I am very grateful to him for the help he has given me and the information he has supplied.

In reviewing public health, regard must be paid to virility as well as to the mortality of the population. We had a credit balance in this score, a surplus of 51 live births over the deaths. The birth rate is level with the national rate of 15 per 1,000 and the death rate is also on a par with the national average, viz: 11.7 per 1,000 of the population.

This represents an increase of 3 births over the number of babies born in 1954 and 30 more than in 1953.

The stillbirth rate is not so satisfactory, being 38.8 per 1,000 registered births against the national rate of 23.2. Three babies died within the first year of life and one of them died within the first four weeks, giving an infant mortality rate of of 15.15 per 1,000 live births. This corresponds with a rate of 24.9 for the whole of the Country and is an improvement on the rate for 1954 which was 24.6 per 1,000 live births.

Diseases of the heart and circulatory system accounted for the major proportion of deaths and only one case of lung cancer was registered, i.e 9% of all male cancer deaths compared with 30.77% for England and Wales.

The infectious diseases have been very benign in character and measles had greatest prevalence. 140 cases were notified compared with 24 in 1954 and 48 in 1953. Whooping cough contributed 21 notifications and scarlet fever and dysentery accounted for another 8 cases.

Food poisoning affected two families who were on holiday together in the district. Specimens were obtained but unfortunately with negative results.

In Pre-war years the picture regarding infectious diseases was not so pleasing as shown in Table 4.

There was a drop in the number of cases of tuberculosis from 13 in 1954 to 10 in 1955. 8 of these cases were respiratory.

No case was dealt with under Section 47 of the National Assistance Act although several cases were investigated. In each one, with the co-operation of the Welfare Officer and Geriatrician, satisfactory arrangements were made. The County Home Help Service also played an important part in retaining many old people in their own homes.

Finally, to the Chairman and Members of the Health Committee, I wish to express my thanks for the interest they have shown and to record my gratitude to the Staff of the Health Department for their hard work and loyalty.

I am,
Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

Medical Officer of Health.

GENERAL STATISTICS

The Area of the District is 92,964 acres.

The number of inhabited houses is 4094.

The number of inhabited houses erected during 1955 is 16 by the Local Authority and 8 by private persons.

The Rateable Value is £57,917 and the sum represented by a penny rate is £230. 12s. 10d.

The estimated mid-year population is 12530 and this figure is taken when calculating the Birth and Death Rates.

VITAL STATISTICS

Live Births

	Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	90	98	188
Illegitimate	5	5	10
Totals	95	103	198

Birth Rate per 1,000 population 15.0

Still Births

Legitimate	4	4	8
Illegitimate	-	-	-
Totals	4	4	8

Stillbirth Rate per 1,000 total live births and stillbirths. .. 38.8

Deaths

Male	Female	Total
77	70	147

Rate per 1,000 of the population .. 11.7

Deaths from Puerperal Sepsis .. Nil
Deaths from Other Puerperal Causes .. Nil

Death Rate of Infants under one year:

All infants (per 1,000 live births) .. 15.15
Legitimate infants (per 1,000 legitimate births) .. 15.96
Illegitimate infants. Nil

Deaths from Cancer - 27
Measles - Nil
Whooping Cough - Nil
Diarrhoea - Nil

CHIEF CAUSES OF DEATH (Table 1)

	Male	Female	Total
Tuberculosis (Resp)	1	-	1
Tuberculosis (Other)	-	-	-
Syphilitic Disease	-	-	-
Diphtheria	-	-	-
Whooping Cough	-	-	-
Meningococcal Infections	-	-	-
Acute Poliomyelitis	-	-	-
Measles	-	-	-
Other infective & parastic diseases	1	-	1
Malignant neoplasm - stomach	2	-	2
" " - lung, bronchus	1	-	1
" " - breast	-	3	3
" " - uterus	-	-	-
Other malignant & lymphatic neoplasm	8	13	21
Leukaemia, aleukaemia	-	1	1
Diabetes	1	2	3
Vascular Lesions of Nervous System	20	15	35
Coronary disease, angina	14	8	22
Hypertension with heart disease	-	-	-
Other Heart disease	10	12	22
Other circulatory disease	2	4	6
Influenza	-	-	-
Pnuemonia	-	1	1
Bonchitis	1	1	2
Other diseases of respiratory system	-	-	-
Ulcer of stomach & duodenum	-	1	1
Gastritis, enteritis, diarrhoea	1	-	1
Nephritis, nephrosis	-	1	1
Hyperplasia of prostate	1	-	1
Pregnancy, childbirth, abortion.	-	-	-
Congential malformations	-	1	1
Other defined & ill defined diseases	10	5	15
Motor vehicle accidents	2	-	2
All other accidents	1	2	3
Suicide	1	-	1
	77	70	147

INFECTIOUS DISEASES (Table 2)

Scarlet Fever	5	Acute Poliomyelitis	-
Whooping Cough	21	Dysentery	3
Diphtheria	-	Ophthalmia Neonatorum	-
Measles	140	Puerperal Pyrexia	-
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis	-	Food Poisoning	5

TUBERCULOSIS (Table 3)

	15-24	25-44	45-65	65 & over	Age Unknown	TOTAL
Respiratory	3	1	2	1	1	8
Other	1	-	1	-	-	2
Totals:	4	1	3	1	1	10

INFECTIOUS DISEASES PRE-WAR YEARS COMPARED WITH 1955 (Table 4)

	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1955
Scarlet Fever	28	48	39	33	8	30	5
Diphtheria	3 (1D)	2 (1D)	7	18	14	6((1D)	-
Puerperal Pyrexia	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
Pneumonia	7	4	-	3	5	1	-
Erysipelas	2	3	3	2	6	3	-
Enteric Fever	1	1	-	1	1	-	-
Poliomyelitis	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Measles	-	-	-	-	-	-	140

1D = one death.

SANITARY INSPECTORS ANNUAL REPORT 1955

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have much pleasure in submitting to you my first Annual Report on the sanitary circumstances of the District for the year ending 1955. It will be evident, after perusal of the Report, that the number of inspections, particularly in regard to Housing and Meat Inspection, falls far short of the number required for proper administration of the health duties of a Local Authority of this size and population. Additional staff to assist in this work is a subject which will require consideration at an early date. The reorganization of the whole of the Cleansing Service caused a great deal of anxiety because of lack of knowledge of the District, but time will tell if adjustments are necessary.

I am indebted to Mr. O.M. Farrell, Engineer and Surveyor, for supplying the information concerning Water Supply and Sewerage.

I remain,

Your obedient servant,

J.A. STAIG.

Sanitary Inspector.

.....

WATER SUPPLY

Rock Village Private Supply.

Following on shortage of water supply to Rock Village and neighbouring farms it was decided that temporary augmentation of the supply be effected by providing extra storage at Rock Hall (Roof level) and feeding it from the private Rock Midsteads Water Tower.

Coquet Reservoir Water Scheme.

It was decided after consultation with representatives from Northumberland County Council, the Alnwick Urban District Council and discussions at several Council meetings that this Council should participate in the proposed regionalisation of water supply to the northern part of the County by means of a reservoir to be built on the River Coquet at Alwinton.

Longframlington Borehole.

Regarding the Council participation in the above scheme it was decided to discontinue any further operations with regard to the Longframlington Borehole.

Hauxley and Togston Water Supply - Chlorination.

Arising of a series of adverse bacteriological reports a drip feed chlorinator was put into operation at the Sturton Grange reservoir on 27th May, 1955. Following this installation, further samples were collected and these proved satisfactory.

Temporary Shortages of Water Throughout District.

Because of the prolonged dry spell during the summer months it was necessary to have public notices warning users of shortage of water, exhibited at Alnmouth, Felton, Swarland, Hauxley, Radcliffe and Togston. At Alnmouth during the Bank Holiday week the tendency was for the consumption to be in excess of supply. In Felton and District and Swarland, the consumption was higher than usual and after the issue of the posters the overall consumption dropped.

The water shortage in Swarland was aggravated by a fractured main which was difficult to locate. In the Howick village area because of the almost complete failure of the private supply, water had to be carted to this area for a considerable period.of time.

SEWERAGE

The remaining portion of sewerage to the north end of Longhoughton village was completed during the year. Approval was received from the Ministry to proceed with the proposed Shilbottle sewage disposal works.

FOOD AND DRUGS

Meat Inspection.

The following table gives and indication of the total animals killed in the district for the year ended, together with details of the number of carcases and offal inspected and condemned.

Appendix

Carcases and offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part.

	Cattle excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep & Lambs	Pigs	Horses
Number Killed (if known)	987	5	49	311	791	NIL
Number Inspected	190	3	32	52	158	NIL
All diseased except Tuberculosis & Cysticerci						
Whole carcases condemned	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	23	3	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis and cysticerci	12.1	100	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Tuberculosis only:						
Whole carcases condemned	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Carcases of which some part of organ was condemned	1	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	.15	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Cysticercosis			N I L			

It will be obvious from the foregoing that the time that has been spent on meat inspection is totally inadequate if this very necessary and important service to the community is to be properly carried out. Pressure of other work has curtailed efforts in this direction and it was with considerable misgiving that each week passed with the knowledge that insufficient time was available, for one hundred per cent inspection.

Inspections were carried out at all slaughterhouses, at intermittant intervals. The butchers were asked to co-operate by informing me of any doubtful carcases or organs.

Slaughterhouses

There are seven slaughterhouses licenced by this Authority viz:-

Dodds	Glanton
Roland	Alnmouth
Moore	Warkworth
Taylor	Shilbottle
Clark	Felton
Scott	Craster
Howick Co-op Soc.	Embleton

Apart from one which is of reasonably good standard, having been built for that purpose, the others are mostly old or adapted buildings with their inherent defects of limited space, insufficient hanging room, unsatisfactory drainage, poor lighting, and, in certain cases, poor water supply. A great deal will depend on the future legislation envisaged by the Government, as to whether all, or any, of these buildings will reach the required standard. The premises were maintained in reasonably clean conditions. The number of licenced slaughtermen in the district is 20, all of whom use humane methods of slaughtering. The number of visits to slaughterhouses for inspection purposes, including meat, were 129.

Food Inspection

The following foods were examined and Condemnation Certificates issued to enable claims to be made by the retailers concerned:-

Canned Goods	51 tins
Meat	33 "
Milk	14 "

No legal proceedings were involved.

Ice Cream

No complaints were received of unsatisfactory ice cream. There are no manufacturers of ice cream in this area. The licences issued by the Council in respect of wrapped ice cream now total 34.

STREET NAMES & NUMBERS

The work involved under this heading can absorb a considerable amount of time and this was restricted in preference to the more urgent and vital Public Health problems. No progress was made during the year.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT

A total number of 191 routine visits were made to premises and sites in connection with nuisances, drainage inspections, minor housing defects, and burial of animals on fore-shore.

TENTS, VANS & SHEDS

The natural beauty of the coastal areas of the District is becoming progressively more attractive to owners of caravans. Whilst the caravan of today cannot be compared with the hideous structures which purported to be caravans of the immediate post-war period, it is nevertheless becoming a serious problem to exercise full control over the increasing number of caravans occupying unlicenced sites. A licenced site, properly managed, rarely gives rise to any disciplinary action against owners or occupiers

The unlicenced site all too often is either congested or an eyesore, but, the requirements of the present law, particularly as regards licencing periods, condone such a site, and the Local Authority is powerless to prevent such happenings. Like many other Authorities we must await guidance and firmer controlling powers from the Government, before this problem can be solved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned - caravanners, owners and Local Authorities.

When time permits it will be necessary to go into the whole question of the number of sites which are fully licenced and discuss the policy to be adopted for the unlicenced sites.

STREET CLEANING & PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The total number of visits in respect of supervising these duties was 28. There are two Public Conveniences situated at Warkworth and Alnmouth which are under the control of the Council. The Warkworth Public Convenience is attended by a part-time caretaker whilst J. Dunns combines his Street Cleaning duties with that of caretaker at Alnmouth. Large numbers of daily visitors to other resorts in this area particularly at Craster and Newton-by-the-Sea will in the future necessitate more conveniences being constructed. Transport in the form of omnibuses and increasing numbers of private cars are making these resorts freely accessible at week-ends.

HOUSING

The total number of inhabited houses in the District is 4094. The number of new houses completed during the year was 16 by the Local Authority and 8 by private persons.

There was no action regarding the Closing and Demolition of houses under the Housing Act, during the year.

Twenty-three houses were made fit by minor repairs under the Housing and Public Health Acts.

Under the Housing Act 1949 (Improvement Grants) the following applications were dealt with.-

IMPROVEMENT GRANTS HOUSING ACT 1949.

	No of separate houses
1. Applications submitted to local authority during year.	48
2. Applications rejected.	5
3. Applications approved.	41
4. Total number of applications approved in your area since inception of scheme.	135
(In Rural District, houses not included in above table approved during 1955 for grant under the Hill Farming and Livestock Rearing Acts, 1946-54.)	3

It is gratifying to report that there is a continuing interest in the Improvement Grants Scheme which whilst not only helping considerably in eliminating many sub-standard houses from the total Slum Clearance Problem there is also the beneficial effect of retaining houses in their original rural appearances. The number of drainage inspections to all houses was 129

Conversions to Water Closet

There are still a large proportion of houses which are without modern sanitation services, the houses being provided with pails or wet ash closets in various forms. A further slight progress has been made in the abolition of these insanitary nuisances by the conversion to the water carriage system of 48 properties. Of these, 6 were grant aided directly from Council resources to the extent of £10. per closet and the remainder were assisted under the Improvement Grant Scheme, 1949.

Alnwick Rural District

Details of Proposals Submitted to Ministry under Housing Repairs and Rents Act, 1954. S. I.

Part 1

(i)	Estimated number of houses unfit for human habitation within the meaning of Section 9 of the Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954, and suitable for action under Section 11 or Section 25 of the Housing Act 1936.....	310
(ii)	Period in years which the Council think necessary for securing the demolition of all the houses in (i).....	5

Part 2

(iii)	Number of houses in (i) in clearance areas and already covered by operative clearance or compulsary purchase orders, or owned by the local authority.....	123
(iv)	Number of houses which are already in clearance areas and for which clearance or compulsory purchase orders have been submitted to the Minister but have not yet become operative....	None

Part 3

(v)	Number of houses which are already in clearance areas and for which clearance or compulsory purchase orders are to be made or which are to be purchased by agreement within the five years.....	None
(vi)	Number of houses which are to be included in clearance areas still to be declared and which within the five years will be owned by the local authority or will have been included in a clearance order or a compulsory purchase order submitted to the Minister.....	100
(vii)	Number of houses under (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) to be patched (if necessary) and retained within the five years under Section 2 of the Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954, for temporary accommodation.....	None
(viii)	Number of houses under (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) to be demolished in the five years.....	223
(ix)	Number of houses (including those already comprised in operative demolition orders) to be demolished in the five years as a result or action under Section 11 of the Housing Act 1936.....	87

PETROLEUM ACTS & REGULATIONS

The duties under this Act are carried out by this Department and although the Sanitary Inspector does not receive training in this sphere of work, it is often undertaken in addition to his normal routine duties, in some Rural and Urban Areas. It was recommended that the services of specialised officers of the Northumberland County Fire Brigade be obtained for the actual inspection of all installations both old and new. This recommendation was approved so that there is a liaison between administration of the Act and Regulations from this office, and inspection of installations by the Northumberland County Fire Brigade before any licences are granted or renewed. A considerable time must inevitably elapse before all licenced installations can be thoroughly inspected. The number of licences granted by the Council are 81.

CLEANSING

A large portion of the year's work has had to be devoted to this service, as the whole of the service was reorganized on a district basis, following the inclusion of Radcliffe and many outlying farms, within the scheme. In effect, this meant that a large proportion of villages received weekly collections, a few received fortnightly collections, and the farming community which were not within range of a village service, received monthly collections. An additional vehicle and staff were acquired to cope with this work.

After initial teething troubles this service settled down to a routine service and genuine complaints are now very rarely received. There are two factors to this Service which will require serious consideration in the future and these are:-

(1) equipment in the garage to provide better facilities for servicing the vehicle and,

(2) additional staff to cope with the proper maintenance of refuse tips and relief duty during period of sickness. If these tips are not maintained properly, owners will become reluctant to permit the disposal of household refuse on their land.

It is necessary, in the interests of this service, to allow a considerable portion of administrative time to problems connected with staffing, collections, disposal, equipment and vehicle maintenance.

The permanent staff now consists of J. Bruce, P. Harle, J. Mather, G. Sanderson, E.T. Stewart, E.R. Bailey and E. Cox.

There are four vehicles employed in the collections.

FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 & 1948.

1. INSPECTIONS for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors)

Premises.	Number on Register	Inspections.
(i) Factories in which Sections 1,2,3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	5	2
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	59	5
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises)	3 (Bldg. Sites)	3
TOTAL:	67	10

2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND: N I L

PREVENTION OF DAMAGE BY PESTS ACT 1949

REPORT FOR 12 MONTHS ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1955

	TYPE OF PROPERTY Non-Agricultural				
	(1) Local Authority	(2) Dwelling Houses (inc. Council Houses)	(3) All other (inc. Business Premises)	(4) Total of Cols. (1) (2) & (3)	(5) Agricultural
1. No. of Properties	27	3581	316	3924	841
2. No. of Properties inspected:					
(a) Notification	Nil	55	9	64	4
(b) Survey	27	80	25	132	110
(c) Otherwise	Nil	32	11	43	12
3. Total Inspection & Re-Inspections.	32	170	50	252	156
4. No. of Properties Infested:					
(a) Rats (Major	6	12	3	21	7
(Minor	14	40	3	57	56
(b) Mice (Major	-	10	4	14	-
(Minor	-	-	2	2	5
5. No. of Infested Properties	20	62	12	94	1
6. Total Treatment	60	65	14	139	2
Re-treatments		Nil	Nil		Nil
7. No. of Sec. 4 Notices		Nil	Nil		Nil
8. No. of "Block" Controls		38		38	